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ABSTRACT

This report is the fifth in a series on cultivating excellence in education for the purpose of training and retraining school leaders of the 1990s. The role of school administrators, and especially building principals; the characteristic administrative functions; the step-by-step procedures for implementation; and the advantages and possible disadvantages of school-based management are discussed. Framing the discussion are two fundamental beliefs: (1) Those most closely affected by decisions should play a significant role in making those decisions; and (2) educational change will be most effective and long-lasting when carried out by people who feel a sense of ownership and responsibility for the process. (JAM)

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CULTIVATING EXCELLENCE

A Curriculum for Excellence in School Administration

V. School Based Management

By

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Prepared by the
New Hampshire School Administrators Association

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SCHOOL-BASED MANAGEMENT

John H. Lawson

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SCHOOL BASED MANAGEMENT

by
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I. Introduction:

There is a revolution occurring today in American management which is based on theory, research, and hard fact. It's goal is to improve the productivity of organizations. Managers at every level and in every kind of organization are joining in this revolution. To join this movement requires that we rethink the tried, and, as it turns out, not so true management principles that traditionally have served our institutions, often poorly.

II. Research on Productivity:

Warren Bennis from the School of Business Administration at the University of California has done considerable research on the subject of productivity. His recent research involved interviewing 60 corporate and 30 public sector leaders. The group was very diverse and ranged from shy, quiet and introverted, to outgoing, outspoken and charismatic. Yet they all shared areas of competence despite sharp personality differences. All agreed that there is in the U.S. today a productivity and a more subtle work commitment gap. There is, according to Bennis's conclusions, a reluctance to commit to one's work or employer.

Another survey by the Public Agenda stated that less than 1 out of 4 job holders (23%) in the U.S. say they are working at full potential. Nearly half said they do not put much effort into their jobs above what is required. The overwhelming majority (75%) said they could be significantly more effective on their jobs than they are now. And nearly 6 in 10 working Americans believe "that most people do not work as hard as they used to."

A third study, done at the University of Michigan, concluded that the gap is widening considerably between the number of hours workers spend on productive labor.

This increasing productivity gap has lead Bennis to ask this central question: "How can we empower the work force and reap the harvest of human effort?"

Bennis believes that, "The factor that empowers the work force and ultimately determines which organizations succeed or fail is the leadership of those organizations. Although there are dozens of books and hundreds of studies on leadership, I am especially fond of the statement: "Leaders are educators that trust every person as a full-fledged team member for reasons of performance as well as humanity." Doing this , however, means acting on a deep-down belief in the potential of very person to contribute. It means giving people a chance to learn the difference between mistakes and disaster. This process only works when it is characterized by accountability and unwavering support.

III. School Management:

Do these and other studies about the work force and management have relevance for schools which are among the most complex organizations in America today? I think they do even though schools are more complicated than most other organizations because of the multiple expectations laid upon them, and because of the crucial place they have in our society as they struggle to reconcile many competing demands and other contradictory forces.

It is clear to most Americans that the management of schools is becoming more difficult today. Societal change is accelerating - technologically, culturally and structurally. How to respond to these demands which are accelerating the pressures on school policy makers and administrators and how to manage the changes that are facing us form the major and increasing challenges for school leaders.

How can we go about making the necessary changes in our schools and districts and survive the pressures that are inevitable? There is no magic formula for success but we do need to understand that strong leaders create strong organizations and weak leaders create weak organizations. And strong leaders in government, the private sector and the public domain have some common themes that guide their thinking and actions today. One of these that appears in several studies is the need for trust which is essential to any successful organization. When trust is evident it can be felt in many ways because people feel significant. They feel that they are making a difference to the success of the organization, they feel part of a community, a team, a family, and they believe work is exciting. They believe that what they are doing has meaning and significance which empowers them to make decisions for the good of the organization.

IV. Decentralization of Decision Making:

Believing in the theme of trust, I.B.M. Chairman John Akers said in England last year that I.B.M.has done a lot to improve its products but they still can be dramatically improved. "One way," he said, "is to decentralize and push down the level of decision making within I.B.M." Support for decentralization comes from a number of recent major education reports. These reports agree that local school (teachers and administrator) decision-making makes a difference. How does it affect school change and lead to improvement?

1. It benefits teachers by providing greater motivation for their work. Increased teacher involvement in decision-making tends to attract to and retain brighter and more creative people in the profession.

2. It benefits principals by giving them more time to concentrate on their key priority: instructional leadership.

3. It benefits superintendents by allowing them to concentrate on long-range planning and the need to communicate his/her vision to everyone outside of the schools who can help make it a reality.

4. It benefits school board members by assuring them that all of the resources of their schools are being effectively used to benefit students.

In recent years, experts in business and the industrial sector have emphasized the advantages of decentralization . Some of the best managed companies in America such as I.B.M., I.T.T., Hewlett Packard and other Fortune 700 businesses have developed ways of allocating authority to lower and lower levels in order to encourage workers at every level to assume responsibility for what they do.

Education writer, John Goodlad, believes that teachers and principals must be able to respond quickly to changing conditions. He thinks that when they are responsible and have the authority to take action, local school officials are more likely to place low reading scores or high drop out rates as priority items on their agendas. Although decentralization seems to be more difficult to achieve in school districts because many superintendents and board members often try to assign responsibilities to subordinates rather than help them to assume responsibility for what they do, some districts are beginning to examine whether the way education decisions are made can become another tool to enhance productivity that will result in improved student achievement. This new style of decision-making is called "School-Based Management."

V. School - Based Management - What is it?

School-Based Management goes by many different names including school-site autonomy, school-site management, school-centered management, decentralized management, school-based budgeting, school-site budgeting, responsible autonomy, shared governance, the autonomous school concept, school-based curriculum development and administrative decentralization. School-Based Management (SBM) is the most widely used term and will be used throughout this paper.

School-Based Management is a process that involves individuals responsible for implementing decisions in actually making them. Under School - Based Management, decisions are made at the level closest to the issues being addressed. This means that teachers are involved in solving classroom problems, principals in solving building-wide problems, and superintendents in making district-wide decisions.

School Based Management is based on two fundamental beliefs:

1. Those most closely affected by decisions should play a significant role in making those decisions (because educators and parents know best how to tailor programs to the needs of their students).

2. Educational change will be most effective and long-lasting when carried out by people who feel a sense of ownership and responsibility for the process.

School-Based Management is grounded in several research principals although school decentralization research is relatively new, and has not completely answered the question of whether it makes a difference to students. Those principals are:

1. A school is the primary unit of change.

2. A healthy school climate is an important prerequisite for effective improvement.

3. A high level of trust, open communications and a holistic concern for people promote effective school improvement efforts.

4. Significant and lasting school improvement takes considerable planning time and resources.

5. School improvement requires personal and group commitment to new and higher performance levels.

6. Teachers and principals must believe that all students can master the basic learning objectives of the school.

7. The role of the principal is the key to effective school change.

8. Collaboration, dialogue, school decision-making and adaptability characterize school improvement.

9. Efforts to change schools have been most effective when they have been focused toward influencing the entire school culture in a risk-free, collegial atmosphere.

10. Change in the total organization of a school is fostered through teacher participation in project planning and implementation with strong, active encouragement, commitment, and acceptance of the results from supervisors.

Although School - Based Management has been around a long time (35 years), it has become more popular in the last decade for two significant reasons: the importance ascribed to school-site management by the research on effective schools (Purkey and Smith, 1985) and the so-called "Second wave of education reform concerned with deregulation and decentralization," (Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy, 1986). Another factor is the impact of flexible management that swept the U.S. business community following publication of In Search of Excellence (Peters and Waterman, 1982).

Currently School - Based Management is being tried in many schools through the United States as a reaction to the failure of many of the "top-down" mandated school reform proposals of the 1980's. In some of the large urban school districts, School-Based Management has been adopted as a last ditch effort to respond to the overwhelming challenges facing them. In other districts, School-Based Management has been embraced to involve teachers and parents as working partners in the education of their children. School districts considering School-Based Management must recognize:

1. The expertise and competence of those who work in individual schools to make decisions to improve learning opportunities for their students.

2. That it gives teachers and parents increased involvement in and a sense of ownership over school decisions.

3. That it will improve the morale of teachers and parents because it enables them to learn that they can have an immediate impact on their school environment.

4. That it shifts the emphasis on staff developing because teachers would be more involved in determining what they need.

5. That it focuses accountability on decisions making it clear which individual, the superintendent at the district level and the principal at the school level, has ultimate responsibility for any decision.

6. That it brings both financial and instructional resources in line with the instructional goals developed in each school.

7. That it helps to provide better services and programs to students, and allows faster response to school problems such as low mathematics achievement or a high drop-out rate.

8. That it nurtures and stimulates new leaders at all levels of a school district. New stars tend to emerge from the process while a rebirth of energy and enthusiasm affect others.

9. That it increases the quality and quantity of communications among faculty, parents, principals and superintendents as formal, top-down memos and telephone calls are replaced by more informal, face-to-face discussions.

10. That face-to-face communications in a school and district are more likely to cause successful programs to be shared between teachers and principals and principals and superintendents.

11. That under School-Based Management, district decisions are more likely to reflect the needs of individual schools resulting in stronger support from parents, and teachers who feel a sense of ownership.

12. That School-Based Management produces greater trust among teachers, parents, principals, superintendents and school board members.

While School-Based Management empowers local school people to be more involved in decision-making, it does not blur the lines of authority and responsibility but gives them clarity. It does provide school personnel with more autonomy, more freedom to act, and helps to develop a sense of acceptable rules about details, about a course of action that both leaders and followers can find worthy of their attention and time. And it does bring with it the need for a shared sense of values that any decentralized system of decision-making requires for success. This shared sense of values tends to be accompanied by peer pressure to perform up to one's limits and to attain the highest possible standards.

School-Based Management does not diminish the importance or legal authority of school committees and superintendents. Authority transmitted by state legislators to elected and appointed school officials is not affected by adoption of any system of school decision-making. Even without School-Based Management, most school committees already delegate significant authority to superintendents and principals. School-Based Management does not change the legal governance structure of a school and district. School Boards do not give up authority by sharing decision-making but merely delegate more to principals, teachers and parents in recognition that their expertise can be utilized to improve a school's performance.

What are some examples of decisions that have been made at schools employing School-Based Management?

1. Developing school educational priorities based on district priorities, taking into account the needs of local students.

2. Allocating a building's resources to meet the specific educational needs of some or all students.

3. Determining a professional development program that meets the needs of faculty.

4. Selecting textbooks and supplemental curriculum materials.

5. Screening and selecting applicants for teaching and other vacancies in their schools.

6. Involving faculty in determining whether probationary teachers should be re-elected.

7. Deciding to reallocate budgeted resources to address the education needs of students.

What are some examples of decisions that School-Based Management schools do not make?

1. Determining the district's budget.

2. Selecting textbooks for general use through out the district.

3. Developing a final list of district priorities.

4. Selecting principals (although local school screening committees might make recommendations).

5. Planning and supervising capital expenditures for new construction or major repairs of buildings.

6. Developing district education objectives and curriculum (although school personnel would probably provide input).

7. Adopting district policy (although school input would be included in the development process).

Under School-Based Management, the principal, as the only person in the school that sees the whole operation of the school, assumes an even more important role. Although others will be involved in decision-making, only the principal will have the unique perspective of understanding all aspects of the school. Just as the superintendent must be the leader of the school district, the principal must be the leader of the school, especially in instructional matters, if School-Based Management is to be successful.

Under the School-Based Management, principals assume increased authority and responsibility as traditional roles change greatly. They have greater discretion in determining budget priorities, in selecting teachers, in establishing staffing patterns, in developing educational programs that meet district-wide objectives, in sharing the governance of their schools, and in participating in district decision-making. Along with this increased authority and discretion for making decisions comes increased accountability for the principal.

Schools using School-Based Management, are expected to develop a clear set of educational objectives and then having their performance in meeting these objectives monitored. Principals that are unable to provide the leadership that is required to meet their school's educational objectives are given every opportunity and support to be successful. If, after sufficient time and help has been given, they are unable to achieve the objectives of their schools, they may have to be removed.

A number of administrators using School-Based Management believe and research on effective schools agree that to be successful principals must be proficient in these general areas:

1. Oral and written communications.

2. Personnel management.

3. Instructional leadership.

4. Business management.

5. Facility management.

6. Community relations.

7. Conflict management.

As important as principals are in the successful implementation of School-Based Management, they must be able to encourage and applaud the participation of others in designing programs as they attempt to find an acceptable balance between freedom and order. School-Based Management activities occurring in some districts today include:

* Teachers having input into decisions about school climate, attendance, discipline policies, selection of classroom materials that meet district policy, teaching strategies and methods, staff development and goal setting in their schools.

* Superintendents continuing to be responsible for setting and achieving district goals, communicating their vision and shared values, and building district support for the schools in each of the communities within their jurisdiction.

- School committees playing a pivoted role in supporting School-Based Management by understanding how it works and by being cautious about overturning decisions made at school and district levels.

How Would You Go About Implementing School-Based Management?

Changing from a traditional, hierachial model of school governance with structure as its most important element to School-Based Management with its decentralization of decision-making isn't easy and it will not be accepted by all of the present actors at most school sites. But it is worthwhile investigating because current school structure which has its origin in Frederick Taylor's outmoded scientific management theory often suppresses talent and discourages risk-taking and mutual support rather than providing opportunities for experimentation and success. As John Scully, President of Apple, recently wrote in his book Odyssey: "A company owes its employees one of the most rewarding experiences in their lifetime, a chance to grow, to achieve, and to make a difference in the world." Don't schools have this same responsibility to their employees?

Research on schools that have developed viable School-Based Management plans indicate that several factors assured their success. They were:

1. Receiving solid support for School-Based Management from their School Boards and Superintendent.

2. Beginning with an awareness of what School-Based Management is and is not among administrators, teachers, parents and citizens. This awareness resulted from visiting schools using School-Based Management, reading articles, books, documents and research studies about School-Based Management, talking with each other about the potential successes and failures of School-Based Management, and learning to trust each other.

3. Determining whether their school was ready and willing to embrace School-Based Management.. The key to this readiness and willingness was measured by how open the communications were as participants shared their expectations, values and desires for better performance by students.

4. Establishing a School-Based Planning Committee with representatives from the teachers, parents, the administration, the school board, citizens and, in some instances, students that sorted out what each can do best within the constraints of local policy and the law.

5. Surveying the community to discover the educational aspirations of citizens, the perceived strengths and weaknesses of the school, and to determine the unmet needs of students.

6. Setting educational objectives for the school that supported and complimented those of the district.

7. Agreeing on a time-line for training School-Based Management Committee members.

8. Deciding how to implement School-Based Management in a school and district. (Many districts have chosen to pilot School-Based Management in one school before committing School-Based Management to all schools).

9. Agreeing to begin School-Based Management in one, two and three of the areas usually included in such a plan. These areas are finances which requires developing a school-based budget format, curriculum and personnel.

10. Selecting some initial issues that are achievable to provide early success for the School-Based Management Planning Committee.

11. Agreeing on a monitoring system and evaluation procedures and criteria before School-Based Management is implemented to assure objectivity and to allow for rationale adjustment of the plan as it develops.

What Are Some Of The Problems Schools And Districts Have Encountered With School-Based Management?

1. Principals, union leaders and collective bargaining agreements have interfered with the implementation of School-Based Management.

2. State mandates have prohibited schools from experimenting with its governance structure.

3. In some schools studying School-Based Management, a lack of trust and skepticism among principals, teachers and parents have stimmied School-Based management efforts.

4. Some teachers don't want to become involved in making decisions that have traditionally been made by management.

5. In some districts adopting School-Based Management, there has been political pressure to reduce the size of the district's administrative staff.

6. In some of the large urban districts the issue of equity has been raised because School-Based Management schools have received more resources than other schools.

7. Failure to define adequately and to understand clearly the new roles of board members, superintendents, principals, teachers and parents has caused School-Based Management not to be successful in some schools.

8. A lack of time and financial resources for proper training and staff development had led to the demise of School-Based management in some schools.

9. A paucity of principal and teacher training or disposition for a new decision-making model and changed relationships has caused School-Based Management not to succeed in some schools.

10. In some schools, School-Based Management Committees have misunderstood their roles and have become political handicaps for the superintendent and school board members.

Conclusion:

It is clear from developments in and research about American management that a revolution is taking place today. It is wide spread and having its impact on many corporations and governmental agencies. It is now reaching into the public school sector for the same reason that it is being adopted by the private sector: as a response to the need for improved performance by employees. How do we begin to exercise the necessary leadership to improve the performance of our schools? The best hope, I believe, is to jump into the boat, grab an oar, and start pulling along side of the other men and women remembering that leadership is the ability to inspire other people to work together as a team, following your lead, in order to attain a common objective.

If our schools are to assist more students to become successful employees that will be able to compete with employees in other industrial nations and if we are to help more students become active, participating citizens, we must abandon the outmoded authoritarian, hierarchial approach to managing schools. School-Based Management is a concept designed to underscore and attain an operating method whereby individual schools have a high degree of management authority. The philosophy of School-Based Management is very coherent across many different programs (educational quality from local control, motivation from local ownership). But the organization and operation of School-Based Management programs is extremely diverse. Programs originate in different ways and in different local contexts with no

common model. Common dimensions of decentralization, however, can be identified (decisions on budgets, curriculum and staffing); but programs differ as to which dimensions are emphasized or decentralized. Districts using School-Based Management seem to decentralize budgets more readily, followed by hiring practices, and then by curriculum decisions. The strongest School-Based Management programs decentralize all three types of decisions. The least aggressive programs try to incorporate selected elements of a more decentralized management style.

School-Based Management programs have been more common in smaller districts although a number of large cities such as Rochester, New York, Miami, Pittsburg and Houston have successfully decentralized school decision-making. Research indicates that the Superintendent is a key figure in School-Based Management initiation as he or she is in most new school developments.

In the private sector the concept of empowerment has led to important knowledge about how human capital can be tapped. People's talents are best unleashed when high level administrators act with energy not only to set the tone and direction of the company, but also to develop vehicles and opportunities for workers to participate creatively in all levels of the organization. Creative superintendents and principals are now applying these concepts to schooling by "empowering others to translate intention into reality and sustain it."

Whether School-Based Management should be considered for your school or district is a local decision. However, schools must change their governance structure if students are to be prepared to function successfully in the next century which is only eleven years away. The societal changes and upheaval taking place in our world today demand new structures, new relationships and new direction for our schools. "The longer we wait, the greater the risk that events will take control and our organizations will gradually lose their ability to shape and direct their future."

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